

SCRM NEWS

The South Carolina Railroad Museum Newsletter

Volume 38 Number 1 January 2010

From the Editor:

As the newly recruited Newsletter Editor, I first wish to offer my humble apologies for any errors, mistakes, misprints, or insults inadvertently presented below. Also, I hope that all members start sending in contributions so we can continue this publication in a timely and interesting fashion. Hopefully, we will be able to include recent news items, summaries of happenings, plans for future new projects and a tally of our accomplishments.

Since the Museum is a totally volunteer operation, we suffer from many of the same issues that all volunteer-based organizations do...a shortage of people, a limit to our funding, an occasional clash of personalities, an immense wish list of things we want, and the need to adhere to Federal and State rules and regulations. Not always fun.

For this first newly resurrected Newsletter, we have a welcome note from our President, including a summary of the Museum in 2009, a discussion of plans for 2010, and an interesting column about MOW (maintenance of way) problems by Phil Woodell.

Please send items to me at HenryN215@aol.com, or call me at 215.888.5104 or mail to PO Box 7246, Columbia, SC 29202

Henry Nechemias, Editor

PLEASE NOTE:

The annual member's meeting will be held on Jan. 16, 2010, 10 AM, at the Museum's Rockton office.

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Letter from Richard Treme, President:

Dear Fellow Members:

Seasons Greetings and Happy New Year!

I want to welcome all new members who have joined us this year, and all old members who have been so supportive in the past. As you can tell, we are a "work in progress", and always in need of various sorts of help. If you prefer hard labor doing track repair and car maintenance, or helping with the Gift Shop or Ticket sales, acting as Car Host or any aspect of railroading, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

2009 has been an extremely busy year. In a big addition to our schedule, we went from operating two days a month to every Saturday during our regular operating season which is June, July and August.

We have almost completed converting one of our work cabooses into an open air car, which should be ready for the 2010 operating season. Renovation of the old office and scale house building has been completed in Rion. At present, we are waiting for the final inspection from Fairfield County. Our plans

are to extend the museum to Rion. This new facility has rest rooms, which will add to the comfort of our guests and allow an expansion of our operations. We are in the process of completing the renovation of our ticket and Gift Shop building at Rockton.

This year we have acquired another locomotive from Shaw Air Force Base this year, giving us three Air Force units, and two Army units, all in good working condition. We also acquired a Southern Caboose which was donated to us by Trenton, SC.

The Museum was fortunate in recently receiving a donation of approximately \$500,000 worth of concrete ties and rail from the SCE&G nuclear power plant in Fairfield County and we are in the process of moving the material to our property.

Even more exciting, after many months of legal dealings, the museum has purchased approximately five acres of property adjacent to the Rion railyard. The property contains several former industrial buildings, and a small office building in fine condition. Eventually this could become an important expansion of our Museum as it contains much of the old machinery used to cut, polish and prepare the Winnsboro Blue Granite.

Finally, for next season, the museum is looking into operating a dinner train, possibly starting in late 2010. This has the potential of raising revenue and gives us the opportunity to recreate dining aboard a train as in the 1950's. And we hope to again have a steam locomotive during October 2010, possibly a different unit than in past years.

We are looking forward to seeing all of you at the Membership Meeting on Saturday, January 16, 2009, 10:00 a.m., at the Rockton Station.

I want to sincerely thank our membership for making 2009 a very good year!

MOW (maintenance of way) report

This is to inform the museum's members about track inspection and maintenance as it applies to our museum and demonstration railroad.

To comply with the federal regulations we are subject to, as a result of hosting the common carrier Norfolk Southern railroad, the 1.1 miles NS uses to access Guardian Fiberglass has to be inspected weekly for compliance with 49 CFR Part 213 requirements. This includes the fit and operability of switches, track gauge, alignment, and surface. Cross ties have to be examined for condition, and joint bars examined for cracks or breaks and loose or missing track bolts. Because this track is used for the common carriage of freight, the various track and material conditions have to combine to meet FRA Class 1 minimums (10 mph freight, 15 mph passenger). We are fortunate that the rehab work done before the NS started operating over our track raised the track condition substantially above FRA Class 2 minimums.

This allows us the luxury of not having to put substantial amounts of time or money into the maintenance of this 1.1 mile segment for the time being. Make no mistake, the time is coming when labor and material will have to be invested to return this track to its present condition...the operation of NS 6 axle road power over this segment will see to that.

Our railroad beyond MP 1.1 is in good condition to MP 1.9 where we transition back to 70 pound rail from the old Rockton-Rion days. Although ties have been installed in the track west of MP 1.9, the combination of relatively light weight surface, line kinked rail, and fouled ballast, accounts for the rough ride between MP 1.9 and the east approach to "Phil's fill". The track on the fill has, as a segment, the lightest rail we are presently operating on. This rail is 62.3 pound rail rolled in 1917 for Czarist Russia, and never

shipped. The embossed lettering on the web of the rail is in “Cyrillic” as proof of its intended destination.

Track between MP 1.9 and the east end of Greenbrier cut, where we transition to the heavier (for us) 100 pound “AREMA” rail, consists of a mixed bag of light rail sections which have to be looked at regularly because of their age and vulnerability to head web separation. Metallurgy for steel rails was in its infancy. Proof of this is visible in the construction of the joint bars used to connect the rails. Joint bars from this era are relatively weak and need to be inspected for cracks and breaks. Defects in the running rails need to be identified and dealt with to meet FRA standards as well.

During our operating season, though not specifically required by the FRA, it’s in our best interest to inspect the track between MP 1.1 and MP 5.1 before each operating day to insure that the track is safe to operate on. The FRA standards are absolute minimums based on operating speeds.

The maximum posted speed on the Rockton, Rion and Western is 20 mph. This speed requires that we meet FRA class 2 standards for track gauge, alignment, profile, cross level gauge and line holding crossties, and joint bar bolts.

The track through the Greenbrier cut is a combination of 85 pound “ASCE” rail on the east and west ends with 100 pound AREMA rail on relatively new wood ties through the center portion of the cut. Due to the gradient through the cut, the nearness of the granite walls and limited sight lines due to the “S” curve in the middle of the cut, the speed limit is set at 10 mph for this track segment. Track inspection through the cut not only looks at the track and its condition, but also at the condition of the walls and the boulders in the walls above the Kelly Miller road bridge, and the trees growing next to the track below the bridge.

West of Rion road crossing, the track rests on a good roadbed and ties that more than meet the standards for class 2 track. The south main track (that’s the one on the concrete ties) passing behind the newly completed Rion Station extends out onto the fill beyond the west Rion switch to MP 5.1 and our present end of track for passenger operations.

During our off season, inspection of the tracks takes place on an as-needed basis, or as often as someone chooses to operate a motor car to Rion or some point out on the west end. At present, motor cars are able to operate to the end of track at the stone arch bridge. This trip can sometimes turn into an all day adventure. There’s plenty of work to do west of MP 5.1 to keep the track open for motor cars and improve the ride into some of the prettiest scenery in Fairfield County. The railroad west of the MP 6 is a mountain railroad in gradient and curvature.

During the track inspection conducted before the first “Santa” trains, a center break was discovered in a joint bar on the west side of the fill. We located a replacement joint bar in our track materials area and, so as not to waste anything, the broken bars went into the scrap container for recycling.

Upon the conclusion of our operating season, track maintenance can begin, with the replacement of cross ties in the Rockton yard tracks (2,3,&4), and the main line between MP 1.9 and MP 3.3. Track surfacing will take place on yard track 3 and the main line between MP 1.9 and MP 2.1. If time and staffing allow, maintenance, storage, and display tracks can be built at Rockton and at Rion. If you have the time and the willingness to learn new “old” skills necessary to build, inspect, repair, and maintain a railroad track and right of way, do not hesitate to call me at 803.635.5966 (home) or 803.606.3297 (cell)

Phil Woodell, Track Supervisor

Summary of 2009 compared to 2008:

Overall, ridership was down slightly in 2009, though we did better during the summer as a result of our increased operating days. Both the State and Fairfield County Tourism offices were very supportive of this change. The Steam Train ridership (this was the third year with the same locomotive) was also down slightly, but charters were up, and these are high profit operations needing small numbers of volunteers.

Some big expenses resulted in the year end bank account being somewhat lower than last year. We bought a third Air Force surplus locomotive, had to pay to move the newly donated caboose across the state, bought five acres of land in Rion, redid the roof on the Norfolk, worked on the a/c in the dining car and bought a replacement back-hoe. In

addition, we did not get all the grant money we had been hoping for.

However, we are certainly in very good shape and hope to get some new grants which will be much welcomed. We are hoping to complete the building in Rion, which can serve as a new museum, do some work on our Ticket/Gift Shop building, and perhaps replace the trailer we currently use as the crew lounge and SCRM office.

The new open-air transfer caboose is almost ready, and should generate some additional income next year. And plans are underway to expand our operations with dinner trains and mystery trains.

Finally, we are hoping to construct a ramp and high level platform to accommodate wheelchairs and handicapped riders. Please come out and help when you can!!

Henry Nechemias, Treasurer

South Carolina Railroad Museum

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